

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MPhil in History (History of War)



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	21 months

About the course

The MPhil in History (History of War) will provide you with the structural and intellectual framework to study all aspects of war from the fall of the Roman Empire to the present day.

The MPhil includes a sustained period devoted to archival research and writing, and is designed to give you a thorough training in historical research, improve your ability to conceptualise and engage with historical problems, and enlarge your understanding of the historical and historiographical context in which your own research is set. The course can serve as either a free-standing graduate qualification, or as a springboard to doctoral study. Students wishing to proceed to doctoral study will be encouraged to develop their doctoral proposals during the first few months of the second year. Skills training and option-choice are flexible and open-ended, to allow you to gain the knowledge and training needed to complete your research project.

By replacing the narrow approaches of more traditionally defined military history with a broader agenda you will be able to study conflict as part of the wider human past. With attention shifting away from conventional wars between states, you will look at how armed struggles have been waged by a variety of different actors with hugely varying impacts on society, economy, culture and environment, as well as differing political implications.

The study of the History of War at Oxford is diverse geographically and spatially, as well as using multiple approaches to understand past conflicts. Further information about history of war research and activities can be found through the faculty website.

All graduate students are encouraged to engage with the faculty's lively research culture of seminars, workshops, and discussions groups. There's something happening nearly every day of the week and sessions often involve leading international scholars. The faculty also runs the Oxford History Graduate Network, which fosters conversation and collaboration between graduate students. Interdisciplinary activities are available through The Oxford Centre for Research in the Humanities (TORCH).

Course structure

You will take three compulsory core papers and two optional papers, as well as undertake an original research project. There is also a research masterclass, which is not assessed. This structure gives access to a wide range of both general and specialised training within the field of history.

Core courses

1. Sources and Historiography

This is a weekly 1.5 hour seminar in Michaelmas term of the first year that will embed core graduate skills and subject-specific historiography and methodology within an exploration of the organisation, conduct, impact and broader context of warfare from the ancient world to the present day. A key goal will be to encourage you to recognise how war in human history can only be fully understood when a study of the more 'technical' aspects are combined with a fuller appreciation of the broader historical context of past conflicts. The course will explore the relationship between war's changing character and wider historical change. Other key topics will include aspects such as warfare in contemporary memory, cultural perceptions of war, warfare and gender, ethics and genocide, war and empire, supply and logistics, war and ideology, combat, mobilisation etc.

2. Theory and Methods

The format is a 1.5 hour weekly seminar in Michaelmas term of the first year. It will cover current methodological and theoretical approaches. Students and course tutors will choose six of these from a syllabus of nine.

3. Writing History

This is a weekly class in Trinity term of the first year exclusively for MPhil students, with all MPhil students taught in one or two classes. The classes range widely across history and involve critical reading and thinking about published work.

4. Research Master Class

Taught in weekly classes in Michaelmas term of the second year, during which students present and receive feedback on their work.

Optional subject course

A free choice of the options on offer taught in six weekly classes during Hilary term of the first and second year. Options of particular interest to the history of war include:

- War in the Modern World
- Europe in the Twentieth Century
- State and Society in Early Modern Europe
- Warfare and the Military in African History
- Manpower and State Power
- Medicine and Modern Warfare.

More information on options is available through the faculty website. Not every optional subject listed may be on offer every year.

Research Project

You will work on original research project throughout both years, under the guidance of your supervisor. You are expected to commit the summer vacation between the two years and the Michaelmas term of the second year to archival research.

Recent topics of MSt and MPhil research have included:

- War and technological innovation
- Operational history in broader context
- Military-civil relations
- Social and cultural history of armed forces
- Counter-insurgency and other forms of 'small war'
- Resource-mobilisation, logistics and the socio-economic impact of war
- War and medicine.

More details of core and optional papers are available on the course webpage of the faculty's website (see the Further information and enquiries section for further details).

Skills Provision

Additional lectures, classes, and tutorials take place in Michaelmas and Hilary terms to provide general and specific training. You will discuss what training you need to undertake your research project with your supervisor. Training available includes document and object handling, palaeography, oral history, text analysis software, GIS software, and statistical analysis.

Language training is also available, with the Faculty organising special courses for historians in French, German, Spanish, and Italian. Other modern language courses are available through the University's Language Centre. Courses in Latin and other medieval languages are also available. Further details on language learning can be found on the faculty website.

Attendance

The course is full-time and requires attendance in Oxford. Full-time students are subject to the University's Residence requirements.

Resources to support your study

As a graduate student, you will have access to the University's wide range of world-class resources including libraries, museums, galleries, digital resources and IT services.

The Bodleian Libraries is the largest library system in the UK. It includes the main Bodleian Library and libraries across Oxford, including major research libraries and faculty, department and institute libraries. Together, the Libraries hold more than 13 million printed items, provide access to e-journals, and contain outstanding special collections including rare books and manuscripts, classical papyri, maps, music, art and printed ephemera.

The University's IT Services is available to all students to support with core university IT systems and tools, as well as many other services and facilities. IT Services also offers a range of IT learning courses for students, to support with learning and research.

You will be able to draw on the specialist resources offered by the Bodleian History Faculty Library which provides dedicated support and training courses for all graduates. You can also access the many college libraries and college archives which house significant collections of personal papers as well as institutional records dating back to the middle ages.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Faculty of History and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. Offers will only be made if appropriate supervision is available.

It is usual practice that MPhil students have one supervisor, but a co-supervisor will be appointed if additional specialist knowledge is required. One supervisor must be a member of the Faculty of History, but a co-supervisor can be appointed from a different department.

Your supervisor(s) is there to provide advice, guidance, and support throughout. You should arrange to meet your supervisor(s) early in your first term to establish a clear framework for your research and writing, and identify any skills training needed to undertake your research. There is no set timetable for the frequency of future meetings, but it is recommended that you arrange to meet your supervisor several times each term, to discuss progress of your research and writing. You should also agree a timetable for the submission and return of drafts of your dissertation.

If you contact a potential supervisor prior to submitting your application, any indication made by an academic that they may be willing to supervise a potential project, is not a guarantee that you will be offered a place, or that the supervisor in question has capacity to supervise you in that particular year.

Assessment

The Sources and Historiography and the Theory and Methods core courses are examined by an assessed essay submitted at the end of Michaelmas term of year one. You must also submit an annotated bibliography and dissertation proposal at this time.

The optional subjects will be examined according to the regulations governing the course, which could be by assessed essay or by examination, at the end of Hilary term in years one and two.

The Writing History core course is examined by an assessed essay submitted at the end of Trinity term of year one.

The research project is examined by a 30,000-word dissertation that is submitted in week six of Trinity term of year two.

Changes to this course

The University will seek to deliver this course in accordance with the description set out above. However, there may be situations in which it is desirable or necessary for the University to make changes in course provision, either before or after you commence your course. These might include significant changes made necessary by any pandemic, epidemic or local health emergency. For further information, please see the University's Terms and Conditions (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/terms>) and our page on changes to courses (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges>).

Costs

Annual fees for entry in 2025-26

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£16,900
Overseas	£41,250

Information about course fees

Course fees are payable each year, for the duration of your fee liability (your fee liability is the length of time for which you are required to pay course fees). For courses lasting longer than one year, please be aware that fees will usually increase annually. Information about how much fees and other costs may increase is set out in the University's Terms and Conditions (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/terms>).

Course fees cover your teaching as well as other academic services and facilities provided to support your studies. Unless specified in the additional cost information (below), course fees do not cover your accommodation, residential costs or other living costs. They also don't cover any additional costs and charges that are outlined in the additional cost information.

Additional cost information

There are no compulsory elements of this course that entail additional costs beyond fees and living costs. However, as part of your course requirements, you may need to choose a dissertation, a project or a thesis topic. Please note that, depending on your choice of topic and the research required to complete it, you may incur additional expenses, such as travel expenses, research expenses, and field trips. You will need to meet these additional costs, although you may be able to apply for small grants from your department and/or college to help you cover some of these expenses.

Living costs

In addition to your course fees and any additional course-specific costs, you will need to ensure that you have adequate funds to support your living costs for the duration of your course.

The likely living costs for the 2025-26 academic year are published below. These costs are based on a single, full-time graduate student, with no dependants, living in Oxford. We provide the cost per month so you can multiply up by the number of months you expect to live in Oxford.

Likely living costs for one month

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£330	£515
Accommodation	£790	£955
Personal items	£200	£335
Social activities	£45	£100
Study costs	£40	£90
Other	£20	£40
Total	£1,425	£2,035

Likely living costs for nine months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£2,970	£4,635
Accommodation	£7,110	£8,595
Personal items	£1,800	£3,015
Social activities	£405	£900
Study costs	£360	£810
Other	£180	£360
Total	£12,825	£18,315

Likely living costs for twelve months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£3,960	£6,180
Accommodation	£9,480	£11,460
Personal items	£2,400	£4,020
Social activities	£540	£1,200
Study costs	£480	£1,080
Other	£240	£480
Total	£17,100	£24,420

When planning your finances for any future years of study at Oxford beyond the 2025-26 academic year, it is suggested that you allow for potential increases in living expenses of 4% each year – although this rate may vary depending on the national economic situation.

More information about how these figures have been calculated is available at www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/livingcosts.

Document accessibility

If you require a more accessible version of this document please contact Graduate Admissions and Recruitment by email (graduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk) or via the online form (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/ask/form>).